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ABSTRACT

The Success Stories project provides assistance to the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) in selecting and recognizing 10 outstanding ABLE students via Midwinter Conference awards ceremonies and publication of their stories. Project staff edited the Success Stories nominations, made arrangements for outstanding students participation at the Midwinter conference, and handled payments. Outstanding students were visited at their programs by field managers who took their pictures, advised them about the conference procedures and assisted program directors to provide local honors for award winners. Project staff published the stories and accompanying flyers, and conducted project evaluation as well as a study of award winners from the past 10 years in order to identify characteristics of their programs. Nine of the 10 award winners attended the Midwinter Conference despite inclement weather and the 10th winner faxed her statement to be read at the awards session. The research study of past winners indicated that, although programs supplied 76 of the 100 award winners, awards were distributed across the state in line with population density and instructional level and were evenly distributed in regard to type of institution. Evaluation of the project showed that it is difficult to select award winners, but that the Success Stories awards is the highlight of the Midwinter Conference for many who attend. (The 10 stories are included in this report.) (KC)

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ED 376 360

1994 SUCCESS STORIES

BUREAU OF ADULT BASIC AND LITERACY EDUCATION
PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
HONORS OUTSTANDING ADULT STUDENTS

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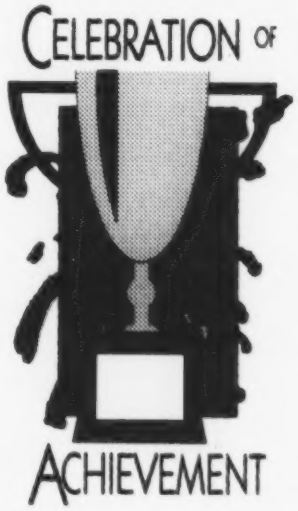
FINAL REPORT



FY 1993-94

Special Project # 98-4035

$19,775

Dr. Sherry Royce, Project Director

SUCCESS STORIES is an ABLE 353 Special Project supported in part by the U.S. Department of Education. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education and no official endorsement should be inferred.

CE 067672

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ABSTRACT

Title: SUCCESS STORIES: A Celebration of Achievement

Project No: 98-4035 **Funding:** $19,775

Project Director: Sherry Royce **Telephone:** (717) 569-1993

Contact Person: Sherry Royce **Telephone:** (717) 569-1993

Agency: Royce & Royce, Inc. 1938 Crooked Oak Drive, Lancaster, PA 7601

PURPOSE:

SUCCESS STORIES provides technical assistance to the Pennsylvania Department of Education's (PDE's) Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) in selecting and recognizing ten Outstanding ABLE students via Midwinter Conference awards ceremonies and publication of the SUCCESS STORIES booklet and flyers.

PROCEDURES:

Project staff edited the Success Stories nominations, made arrangements for outstanding students' participation at Midwinter conference and handled payments. Outstanding students were visited at their programs by field managers who took their photographs, advised them about procedures at Midwinter Conference, and assisted program directors (as needed) to provide local honors for award winners. Project staff published ***SUCCESS STORIES:*** *A Celebration of Achievement* and accompanying Flyers, and conducted project evaluation as well as a study of award winners over the past 10 years in order to identify characteristics of their programs.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

Nine of 10 award winners attended Midwinter Conference despite the inclement weather and the 10th faxed her statement which was read at the awards session. The research study of past winners indicated that while 20 programs supplied 76 of the 100 award winners, awards were distributed across the state in line with population density and instructional level and were evenly distributed as to type of institution .

COMMENTS:

Due to the change in PDE staff in August 1993, the *Sharing Student Success* pamphlet was not revised. Process evaluation indicated that differences in cultural background (immigrants vs. learning disabled) and the amount of information about students provided by the various nominators make the selection process difficult at times. Project evaluation continues to rate this activity as *the highlight of Midwinter Conference for many who attend.*

PRODUCTS:

Final Report, 2000 Success Stories Booklets, 200 Flyers each provided to programs with Success Stories award winners.

DESCRIPTORS:

FINAL REPORT

SUCCESS STORIES: A Celebration of Achievement

A 353 Special Project FY 1993-94

Funded by PDE: $19, 775 # 98-4035

BACKGROUND

Ever since 1978, Pennsylvania has been honoring its outstanding Adult Basic Education (ESL and GED) students at an awards ceremony and legislative luncheon at the Pennsylvania Association for Adult and Continuing Education's (PAACE's) annual Midwinter Conference. This awards ceremony followed by the publication of the Success Stories Booklet and local program flyers constitute one of the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education's (ABLE's) best awareness vehicles. ***SUCCESS STORIES*** encourages potential students to realize that adult education provides a stepping stone to achievement and promotes public understanding regarding the quality of ABLE programs and the empowering effect they can have upon participants' future efforts. Such public awareness is the key to winning and retaining support for adult literacy.

THE SELECTION PROCESS

Nominations for outstanding student of the year are submitted to PDE's Division of ABLE by November. Every local agency funded by PDE under Section 322/353 or Act 143 is eligible to submit one candidate. Nominations are then rewritten by the project director to insure the information is contained on a single page and gives minimal evidence of the nominee's name or program origin. At the Success Stories meeting in early December, the Selection Committee had very little difficulty in reaching consensus on the ten Outstanding Adult Students.

This years selection Committee included:

Samuel Brinton, ABE Director
East Pennsboro Area School District

Peggy Greene, Instructor
Harrisburg State Hospital

Helen Hall, 353 Advisor
PDE, Bureau of ABLE

Caroline Lee, Adult Literacy Coord.
CC of Allegheny County

Ella Morin, 353 Advisor
PDE, Bureau of ABLE

Rocco Mussoline, Director ABE
Hazelton Area School District

Success Stories Selection Committee continued...

John Heisey, Supervisor
Lebanon Adult Learning Center

Frank Paul, Instructor GED
Red Land C.A.P.

Sherry Royce, Project Director
Success Stories

Beverly Smith, Director
Region 6 Staff Development Center

Deborah Skillings, Director
Mon Valley OIC, Inc.

Cynthia West, Community Relations Officer, VP, Dauphin Deposit Bank

Panel members rated each candidate according to eight selection criteria (See Appendix A) and determined their top fifteen choices. The ten nominees receiving the highest number of panel member votes from among the top fifteen were chosen Outstanding Students of 1994.

SUCCESS STORY winners for 1994 and their programs are:

ADAMS COUNTY	**Harold Speelman**, Lincoln I.U. 12
BERKS COUNTY	**Julie Bermudez**, Reading Area Community College
BUTLER COUNTY	**David Wolfe**, Midwestern I. U. 4
GREENE COUNTY	**Mary Rogers,** Community Action Southwest
LUZERNE COUNTY	**Helena Jimenez Mojica,** Luzerne I. U. 18
MERCER COUNTY	**Shun Mei Nemet,** Mercer County Vo-Technical School
MONTGOMERY COUNTY	**Bernadette Osborn,** Eagleville Hospital
NORTHAMPTON COUNTY	**Amy Uhler**, Pen Argyl Adult Education
PHILADELPHIA COUNTY	**Lillian Metzcher,** Lutheran Settlement House Women's Program
	Ruth Salters, Germantown Women's Educational Project

Panel members were asked to comment on the selection process (See Appendix A). All members but one agreed that the stories as rewritten by the project director were treated in an evenhanded manner and supplied sufficient information to select the 10 outstanding students. The dissenter cited *typos* and *incomplete directions* as *making the stories very difficult to read and understand.* Another panel member indicated that a problem inherent in the selection process is not the varied amount of information provided by the nominators but difficulty in *weighing students who were immigrants and refugees, whose experiences were difficult and different, due*

to cultural and language barriers. Other comments included: *Excellent job of preparation for consideration of committee (as always); Coordinator, as always, did a superb job with the information provided ; I do love the large type, my eyes thank you.*

MIDWINTER CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES

Once the outstanding students are selected, the project coordinator identifies the field manager residing in each student's region and provides them with a Field Manager's Worksheet and packet of information (See Appendix A). In addition to photographing the outstanding students at their programs, field managers share copies of each student's story, as revised for the Legislative Luncheon Booklet and the Success Stories Booklet. Students are given the opportunity to make corrections, deletions, and additions to these stories before they are released to the general public.

Field managers provide information about Midwinter Conference activities and responsibilities to the students and their program directors. They hand out expense sheets for student travel. They collect the information that will allow the Success Stories project director to make arrangements, if necessary, for students' lodging and to reserve seating for students, their families, and program staff at the Legislative Luncheon.

For program directors who have never before sponsored an outstanding student, field managers go over *The Guide to Sharing Student Success* (Royce, 1988) and offer suggestions as to how to involve the local community in celebrating this prestigious award.

At Midwinter conference, the photographs taken at the students' programs are posted on a large bulletin board placed in the main registration area. Students are greeted at a special table and provided with ABLE outstanding Student-of-the-Year badges, conference booklets, and table assignments. Field managers as well as the project director tend the table so that there is a familiar face in case the student arrives unaccompanied by local program staff. At the legislative luncheon, students are seated at special tables with their family, program staff and representatives from the Pennsylvania Legislature. A Legislative Luncheon Program provides those attending the luncheon with a capsule version of their success stories. Students are presented with citations from their senators and representatives as part of the luncheon program.

After the legislative luncheon, students take part in a PDE Bureau of ABLE-sponsored success stories session. This is followed by a student reception, provided by PAACE. The group picture

is taken at this reception, which was instituted because students in their followup interviews asked for an opportunity to meet each other and relax after the formal activities.

MIDWINTER CONFERENCE EVALUATION

Believing it to be a privilege to direct this project, every attempt was made by SUCCESS STORIES project director, Sherry Royce, and Field Managers, Jane Ditmars, Kathy Kline, Paula Smith, Randy Varner and Paul Weiss, to provide the ten outstanding students and their directors with efficient, courteous and prompt service. The followup evaluation by program directors (See Appendix A) indicated satisfaction with all conference arrangements. The project director was commended for the quick turn around on payment of expenses and for efficiently handling the extra accommodations needed for students because of the inclement weather.

ABLE directors reported that they honored their outstanding students at the local level by arranging for radio and TV interviews, newspaper articles and editorials, meetings and award ceremonies at local school districts, community organizations and municipalities.

Comments on the value of Success Stories to student and programs included:

- *Even though we (IU Staff) were unable to attend the conference, we were able to view a video tape. Helena feels that she was treated with the greatest respect and is very happy that she had the chance to participate in such a worthwhile program. She would also like to extend her thanks to everyone involved in her special day.*
- *Thank you so much for all you did to make Wednesday, February 9, 1994, such a memorable day for our student Shun Mei Nemet and for me. Everything (except the weather) was just lovely. Shun Mei had a wonderful time, and we got a few great pictures of the celebrations.*
- *The ABLE Student of the Year continues to be the highlight of the Midwinter Conference for many who attend. It not only provides a "shot" of self-esteem to the students, but also allows the Basic Education programs a chance to promote their programs' philosophies concerning adult education.*

SUCCESS STORIES PUBLICATIONS

Two thousand copies of the SUCCESS STORIES booklet (a copy enclosed) were produced. Each outstanding student received ten copies of the booklet, each program with an ABLE winner received ten copies, and the nine regional centers received 5 copies each. The remaining

booklets were sent to all Pennsylvania legislators, PAACE officers, staff of all ABE/GED and Act 143 programs funded through PDE, Division of ABLE, as well as the ABLE State Task Force, 353 and Success Stories Committees, 353 Project Directors, the U.S. Department of Education, Division of DAEL, adult education offices in State Departments of Education and national regional and state clearinghouses.

The project also distributed 200 copies of SUCCESS STORIES flyers to programs that had outstanding students. Eagleville hospital, which has had a winner each year for the past five years, declined the flyers and Pen Argyl requested that only 100 be sent. These flyers tell each winners' Success Story and contain contact information about the winners' program.

- *I want to commend you on the quality of the flyer that explains "Helena's Story." The closing, moreover, is one that really "hits home."*

STUDY OF AWARD WINNERS' PROGRAMS (1984-1994)

Research into the history of Success Stories for the past ten years shows that prior to 1990 some 35 nominations for outstanding adult learners were received each year. As Act 143 literacy programs increased in numbers and built a record of adult learner achievements, the number of agency nominations for outstanding students increased. After a record high of 65 candidates in FY1990, the number of nominations has averaged 50 stories yearly. This represents only 20% of the 250 agencies currently eligible to nominate an outstanding student.

The 100 outstanding adult students over the past ten years have been sponsored by 44 ABLE organizations, with 20 programs supplying 76% of the award winners. As can be seen below, the distribution of award winners in relation to the various ABLE program sponsors is remarkably balanced — especially if one realizes that far fewer funds were channeled to colleges, literacy councils, and community based programs prior to 1990. Line 2 below, an examination of the 20 programs with multiple winners, reveals a similar balanced distribution.

WINNERS' DISTRIBUTION AS TO INSTITUTIONAL SPONSOR

School District Vo-Tech	Intermediate Unit	Literacy Council	CBO	Community College	Rehabilitation Program	OIC Workplace	TOTAL
23	22	15	15	6	15	4	100
16M	18M	13M	12M	4M	13M	0M	76M

Eleven of the 20 programs with multiple winners are large ABLE programs serving hundreds of students in large cities or regions. They have funding from sources other than ABLE; some full time staff; and a large variety of resources. Four are exclusively devoted to working with adults, and three are funded to run ABLE regional staff development centers. The other nine programs with multiple winners represent small school districts and literacy councils, rehabilitation centers, and community-based organizations with ABLE components. Their success appears to be related to long-standing institutional commitment to honoring outstanding ABLE students locally as well as nominating them for statewide recognition. Furthermore, the interest and writing ability of a teacher or administrator can be tied to success; when that individual leaves or develops other interests, the string of successful nominations is broken.

WINNERS' DISTRIBUTION AS TO LOCATION

# WINNERS	PROGRAMS' COUNTY	S. D. CENTER
24	Philadelphia	Region 9
10	Montgomery	Region 8
9	Allegheny	Region 4
5	Berks	Region 7
5	Wyoming	Region 3
4	Delaware	Region 8
4	Luzerne	Region 3
4	Northampton	Region 7
3	Crawford	Region 1
3	Lackawanna	Region 3
3	Lancaster	Region 6
3	Mifflin	Region 5
3	York	Region 6
2	Centre	Region 2
2	Erie	Region 1
2	Lebanon	Region 6
2	Mercer	Region 1
1	Blair Bradford, Cambria, Chester, Clinton, Cumberland, Dauphin	5,3,3,8,2,6,6
1	Greene, Indiana, Lycoming, Susquehanna, Westmoreland	4,4,2,3,4

On a geographical basis, programs sponsoring award winners were located in 28 counties in Pennsylvania with nearly one-fourth coming from Philadelphia. If the outstanding students'

addresses were taken into consideration, even more counties would be represented. The table on page 6 shows the distribution of award winners by location. When analyzed in terms of areas served by Section 353 Staff Development Regional Centers, it is easy to see that the eastern region of the Commonwealth with the most ABLE students has sponsored three times as many outstanding students as the central or western regions.

West	19	Central	18	East	63
Region 1	7	Region 2	4	Region 3	15
Region 4	12	Region 5	4	Region 7	9
		Region 6	10	Region 8	15
				Region 9	24

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS AND RESULTS

The majority of award winners (70) entered ABLE programs at the GED level and passed the GED test; 10 enrollees were ESL students; 18 were initially reading at a 0-4 literacy level, and 2 were ABE enrollees. As reported at the time of their awards:

- 6 of the 18 literacy enrollees were woking at ABE level and 1 had passed the GED
- 8 of the 10 ESL students passed the GED
- 37 students were currently entered in higher education or advanced training programs including three ESL students.
- 15 award winners reported securing and holding jobs as a result of their ABLE experience

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

What does this study tell us about Success Stories awards and nominations? Judging from the past, these awards are distributed across the state in line with ABLE population density and instructional level, and are evenly distributed as to type of institution sponsoring award winners. However, it is also obvious that some programs and program directors do not nominate students for the state recognition award or have met with little success in doing so while other programs and program directors have a special knack for achieving recognition for their nominees.

To encourage increased agency participation in the SUCCESS STORIES nominations process, it is recommended that programs that have three or more outstanding students in the past 10 years be contacted to donate their services as resource specialists. Program personnel from 14 of these agencies have indicated that they are willing to act in this capacity to aid novice programs in the process of nominating and honoring their candidates.

APPENDIX A

Sample Form
for

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING SUCCESS STORIES OF NOMINEES

Name of Nominee _____ Rank _____
Score _____

The following statements are to be used to evaluate success stories intended for the competition to select the Outstanding Adult Basic Education Students of the Year. The maximum score for each criterion is ten (10) points. Place your total score in the blank in the upper right hand corner. Then rank the story in relation to the other nominees' scores. Write the rank in the rank blank shown above.

SCORE		CRITERION
_____	1.	Had to leave school because of external demands placed upon her/him.
_____	2.	Overcame difficult life barriers to re-enter adult education.
_____	3.	Overcame difficult academic/life problems encountered during participation in ABE, ESL, GED classes or Literacy tutoring.
_____	4.	Continued in the program or left upon completing an academic level or attaining her/his personal goals.
_____	5.	Has specific plans for a career, ongoing education, further training, or personal development.
_____	6.	Shows active participation in activities, organizations, and/or a job or jobs.
_____	7.	Has been a promoter and/or supporter of the adult program and/or an inspiration to others.
_____	8.	Evaluator's opinion of overall merit.

TOTAL POINTS _____ (80 points possible)

Focus Publications

SHERRY ROYCE
1938 Crooked Oak Drive
Lancaster, PA 17601 • (717) 569-1663

TO: SUCCESS STORIES PANEL
RE: Evaluation of Editing Process
DATE: December 6, 1993

For purposes of contract evaluation, it would be most valuable for me to have your feedback regarding the Success Stories editing process. Would you please complete the checklist below and return it to me before leaving today.

SUCCESS STORIES EDITING:

	AGREE	*NO*	*SEE COMMENT*
Stories do not reveal the nominees' programs or areas.			
Stories were treated in an evenhanded manner.			
Information supplied was sufficient for me to select the ten outstanding students.			

***COMMENTS** [Optional]:*

Thank you for your help in this matter.

SJR/hs

Sherry Royce,
Project Director
SUCCESS STORIES

SUCCESS STORIES: Director's Survey

midwinter conference evaluation of services

	YES	NO	SEE COMMENTS
1. Conference arrangements were handled efficiently.			
2. Payment for expenses incurred at Midwinter Conference was prompt.			

local activities section

*We engaged in the following **SHARING STUDENT SUCCESS** local activities:*	YES	NO	SEE COMMENTS
1. Contact with student's family			
2. Contact with student's employer			
3. Contact with community agencies			
4. Contact with local government			
5. Contact with state legislators			
6. Media Contact [list and describe below]			
7. Local celebration			
8. Other: [List and describe below]			

comments:

Director's Name and Program _____ **Date:**_____

Please return to **Sherry Royce, 1938 Crooked Oak Drive, Lancaster, PA 17601** after you receive payment for Midwinter Conference expenses.

PACKING LIST

Enclosed for Regional Field Managers

1. Field Manager's Worksheet
2. Expense Voucher for Mileage, Tolls, Parking, and 35mm color film
3. Time Sheet
4. List of Outstanding Students and their Programs
5. List of Quotes already available from each student
6. Success Stories Booklet story for each student
7. Legislative Booklet story for each student

Please go over these stories with your students and make sure they are correct and the student is willing to make all the information included known to the general public.

Enclosed for Outstanding Students and Programs

1. Expense Voucher for Mileage, tolls, lodging on the road.
2. Success Stories: Director's Survey
3. Success Stories: Program's In-Kind Contribution Sheet
4. Copy of the 1992 Legislative Luncheon Program

1994 SUCCESS STORIES

ABLE Award

BUREAU OF ADULT BASIC AND LITERACY EDUCATION
PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
HONORS OUTSTANDING ADULT STUDENTS

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
Robert P. Casey, *Governor*

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Donald M. Carroll Jr., *Secretary*

Office of Postsecondary and Higher Education
Charles Fuget, *Commissioner*

Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE)
Cheryl Keenan, *Director*

SUCCESS STORIES SELECTION COMMITTEE

Samuel Brinton, *ABE Director*
East Pennsboro Area School District

Peggy Greene, *Instructor*
Harrisburg State Hospital

Helen Hall, *353 Advisor*
PDE, Bureau of ABLE

John Heisey, *Supervisor*
Lebanon Adult Learning Center

Caroline Lee, *Coordinator of Adult Literacy*
Community College of Allegheny County

Ella Morin, *353 Advisor*
PDE, Bureau of ABLE

Rocco L. Mussoline, *Director ABE*
Hazelton Area School District

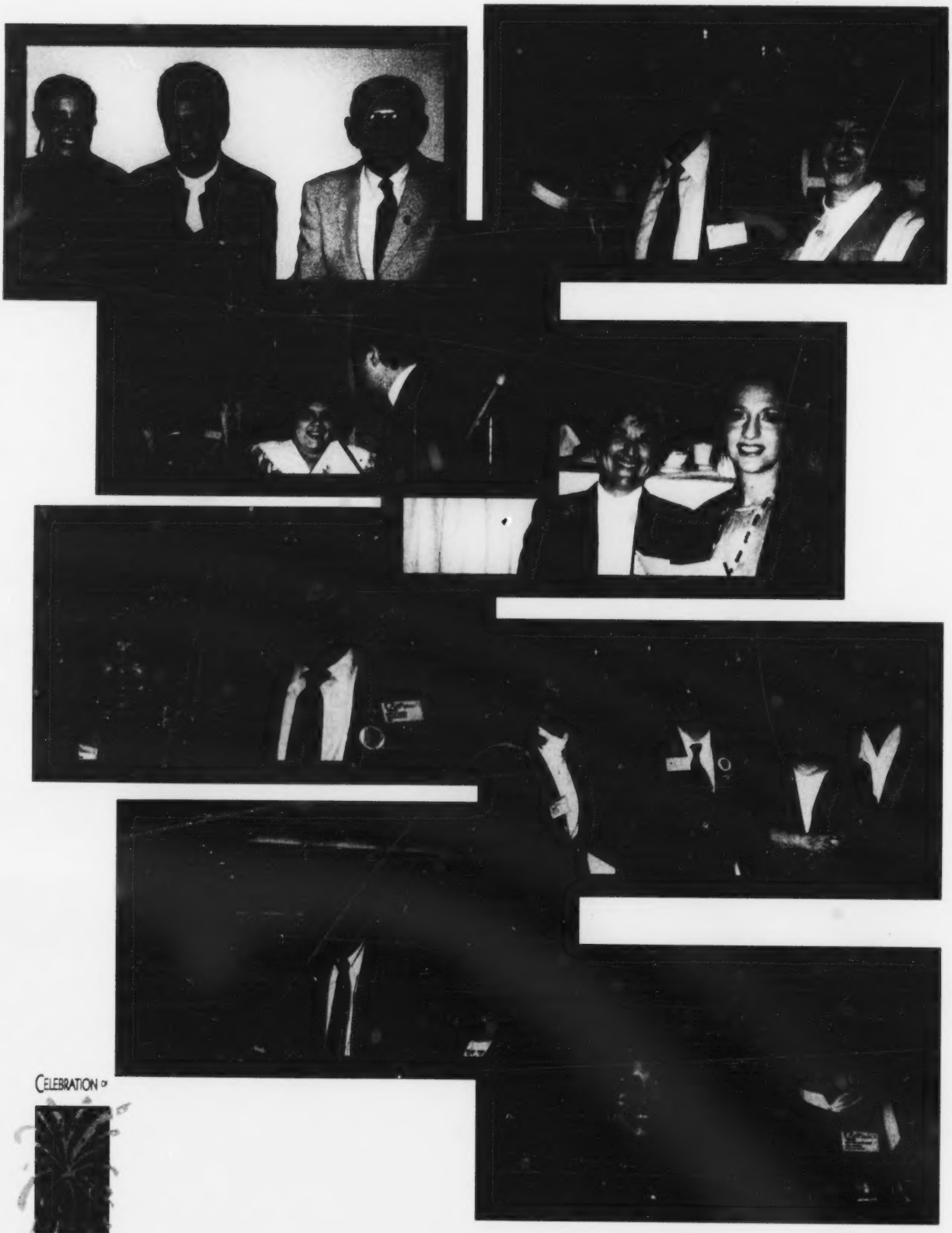
Frank W. Paul, *Instructor GED*
Red Land Community Action Program

Sherry Royce, *Project Director*
Success Stories

Deborah Skillings, *Director*
Mon Valley OIC, Inc.

Beverly Smith, *Director*
Region 6 Staff Development Center

Cynthia West, *Community Relations*
Officer, V.P., Dauphin Deposit Bank



CELEBRATION OF ACHIEVEMENT

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COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
HARRISBURG

THE GOVERNOR

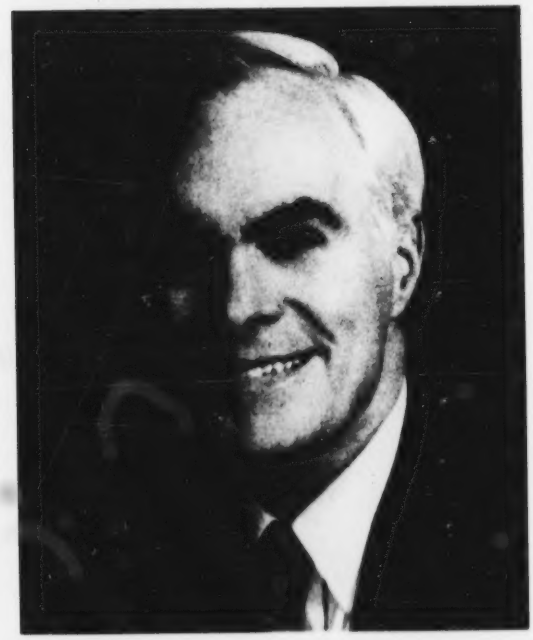
Dear Reader:

In this publication, **Success Stories: A Celebration of Achievement**, you will read about 10 outstanding Pennyslvania citizens who realize that a quality education is vital to meeting life's challenges. These 10 men and women have faced great obstacles and have overcome seemingly impossible barriers in order to become contributing and productive members of the Commonwealth.

Ellen and I strongly support adult basic education efforts in our state. My administration is committed to improving the quality of life in our Commonwealth, and has backed up that commitment with increased funding for adult literacy programs.

The education of Pennsylvania's citizens is essential to our ability to compete in a global economy. When people cannot read or do basic math, they cannot participate in their fullest potential in the home, marketplace, or workplace.

State government must continue its support of adult literacy programs. But, each Pennsylvania citizen also must be actively involved in eliminating illiteracy. Teach someone to read; volunteer at your local school or learning center. Through your efforts, we help all Pennsylvanians achieve success.



Perhaps reading these stories and sharing in the celebration of learning that each of these 10 adults exemplifies will inspire each of us to bring the job of learning to every Pennsylvanian. Together, we can make literacy a reality for everyone.

Sincerely,

Robert P. Casey
Governor

TABLE OF CONTENTS **Page**

ADAMS COUNTY
Outstanding Adult Student: Harold Speelman 4
Sponsor: Lincoln Intermediate Unit 12

BERKS COUNTY
Outstanding Adult Student: Julie Bermudez 6
Sponsor: Reading Area Community College

BUTLER COUNTY
Outstanding Adult Student: David Wolfe 8
Sponsor: Midwestern Intermediate Unit 4

GREENE COUNTY
Outstanding Adult Student: Mary Rogers 10
Sponsor: Community Action Southwest

LUZERNE COUNTY
Outstanding Adult Student: Helena Jimenez Mojica 12
Sponsor: Luzerne Intermediate Unit 18

MERCER COUNTY
Outstanding Adult Student: Shun Mei Nemet 14
Sponsor: Mercer County Vo-Technical School

MONTGOMERY COUNTY
Outstanding Adult Student: Bernadette Osborn 16
Sponsor: Eagleville Hospital

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY
Outstanding Adult Student: Amy Uhler 18
Sponsor: Bangor - Pen Argyl Adult Education

PHILADELPHIA COUNTY
Outstanding Adult Student: Lillian Metzcher 20
Sponsor: Lutheran Settlement House Women's Program

Outstanding Adult Student: Ruth Salters 22
Sponsor: Germantown Women's Educational Project

HAROLD SPEELMAN

Adams County

Sponsor: Henry P. Wardrop
Lincoln Intermediate Unit 12

At the age of three, Harold Speelman's hearing was damaged by a high fever. He was raised by his grandparents who were non-readers. His parents were poor, uneducated and already raising 10 other children in an abusive atmosphere. He grew up scared, not knowing where

to turn for help. His family was unable to provide medical attention for him, and it was not until he was 22 that he was fitted for two hearing aids.

Enrolled in public school, he did not progress because of his hearing problem. Because he was constantly ridiculed by the other children, he suffered from low self esteem. At the age of 10, he was placed in classes for children with special needs. At 17, he dropped out to work in a furniture factory. After four full years in high school, he was still unable to read and did not have the confidence to ask for help. Harold also faced opposition in the workplace. If he did not understand directions or hear a question, his coworkers would make fun of him. He secluded himself from others because he was unable to hear their jokes and stories. When he was 40, the Easter Seal organization provided assistance in improving his speech and teaching him lip-reading. Although fitted with two hearing aids, he still is unable to hear if there is a loud background noise.

> *"Because of my deafness, I've missed a lot in life... Reading makes me like a new person. I felt like I was born again."*

In 1988, his wife, Phyllis, saw an article about literacy in the *Gettysburg Times* and called the Adams County Literacy Council. Matched with a tutor, he completed all four Laubach books, then continued in an ABE class en route to fulfilling his dream of getting a GED. His biggest obstacle in class involves hearing vowel blends and word endings. It makes spelling difficult and frustrates him because he wants to write and feels that his spelling is holding him back. He received a lot of criticism for attending classes, even though he tried to keep it a secret at work. He was afraid that he would be fired, if he admitted he couldn't read.

Harold readily admits that learning to read has given him self-confidence. He serves as a member of the Advisory Board of the Adams County Literacy Council and attends the New Reader Book Club. In 1991, he received the literacy council's Outstanding Student of the Year Award. One of his more memorable experiences was his attendance at a two-and-a-half-day seminar on adult learning at Villanova University. As he continues to learn in an evening GED class, the isolation that he felt because of his hearing and sight problems has become a thing of the past. Harold is a quiet person, but beneath his unassuming exterior is a dedicated family man and a student who overcame personal tragedy to get where he is today. When he gets his GED, he believes he will have the job security to provide a stable home for his family.

JULIE BERMUDEZ

Berks County

Sponsor: Mary Schmidt
Reading Area Community College
Work-Study Program

Julie Bermudez is one of 12 children, none of whom finished high school. Her lively spirit prompted her to start running away from her restrictive home when she was only nine. By the time she was 13, her parents decided to curb her by arranging a marriage with a 36-year-old

man. At age 14, Julie found herself pregnant and in an abusive marriage. Embarrassed at having to explain her bruises, despondent over the death of her six-month-old son who had leukemia, and dissuaded by her husband from continuing school, she quit after completing 8th grade. Pregnant again at 16, she saw herself trapped in the same cycle as her mother, living with a man who wanted her to be uneducated, unassuming, totally dependent and fearful. She moved back with her parents. When her child, Victor, was born, she left him with her mother and went out to find the world. The part of the world she found included alcohol, cocaine and, eventually, heroin.

After she moved to a subsidized housing project with her son, Julie often found herself with no food for her child and no one to help care for him. She would lock him in his room at night so she could go out. She still remembers the morning she literally crawled into her apartment and caught a glimpse of her son's face with the light shining on it. She was horrified by the revelation of what she was doing to herself and her child. She determined then and there to change their lives. She explained to her son what she had to do and how she would need his help. With the support of this exceptional child and her own amazing determination, Julie overcame her drug habit without outside treatment.

"Once you start your GED classes, you're never alone."

Shortly after that, compelled by her son's request for help with his schoolwork, Julie attempted General Educational Development (GED) classes for the first time. But, she wasn't yet ready to make the commitment. Two years ago, she registered for classes again. Soon after she was paired with a tutor, she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Refusing to have a radical hysterectomy, she suffered through chemotherapy only to find the cancer recurring a year later. Another round of chemotherapy resulted in her losing her hair, but not her determination. She continued to attend classes and her tutoring sessions and passed the GED test in April 1993.

She is now enrolled in nursing classes at Reading Area Community College. She also works part-time at a day-care center and volunteers with the elderly at a nursing home. Her goal is to earn her nursing degree in 1996 so she can be off welfare and start saving for the future. As a GED student, she inspired her classmates and the professional staff with her upbeat *we can do it* approach and the obstacles she's overcome. As a GED graduate, she is still inspiring others by volunteering for the adult education mentor program, speaking with students in classes and helping at registration. She is interested in speaking to at-risk high school students about her experiences. Her dream is to have all her siblings finish high school. So far, one brother has earned his GED, and she has enrolled one sister in classes.

CELEBRATION of ACHIEVEMENT

DAVID WOLFE

Butler County

Sponsors:
Angelo Pezzuolo & Elaine Nagel
Midwestern Intermediate Unit 4

David Wolfe quit high school after the 9th grade. Labeled as a bad kid with a lousy attitude who frequently slept when he even bothered to come to school, David frustrated his teachers to the point that one of them suggested: *Why don't you just get out?*

He did and so did his three sisters. His community, a small rural area with a strong work ethic, supported healthy young people who were willing to work. He soon got a job at Warehouse Foods.

During the next 14 years, he earned promotions and raises and held the position of produce manager/buyer. At the time the company closed in 1989, he had married, had two children and owned property. The rough times made him realize the necessity of further education, and he enrolled in the Slippery Rock GED class sponsored by the Midwestern Intermediate Unit. He rediscovered his academic potential and in a few months passed the GED with more than 300 points.

David applied to Slippery Rock University and was accepted on the basis of his GED scores. Some friends were supportive, but others laughed at what they said was a foolish waste of time and money. When he went to his former high school to get his transcript for college admission, the secretary told him: *You can't do it; it's too late for you.* But David said: *The GED success gave me renewed confidence.*

> *"I have come to believe the recipe for success is: setting goals you believe in; maintaining a positive attitude; hard work."*

During the six years from the start of GED classes to the completion of his bachelor's degree in June 1993, his wife worked full time. He worked evenings, weekends and summers at any job he could find. When he had difficulty concentrating because of distractions at home, he began spending time in the library. *I was determined and studied twice as hard to avoid failure,* David said.

Upon graduation, he volunteered to help students in his old GED class. In mid-July, he was hired by the Intermediate Unit as an ABE/GED instructor. He works days at Job Training Placement Act (JTPA) sites and two evenings a week as an ABE instructor. He is very enthusiastic and helps new adult students over their initial nervousness. He notes that students think they can't pass the GED test. He thought that, too. However, they usually surprise themselves.

David plans to start work on a master's degree in the spring. Eventually, he hopes to teach social studies in a public school. He's ready to make a difference for those at-risk students. One thing is certain, he will be a lifelong learner. He is devoting a large portion of his life to *giving all the positive reinforcement I can to anyone trying to better themselves.*

CELEBRATION '92

ACHIEVEMENT

MARY ROGERS

Greene County

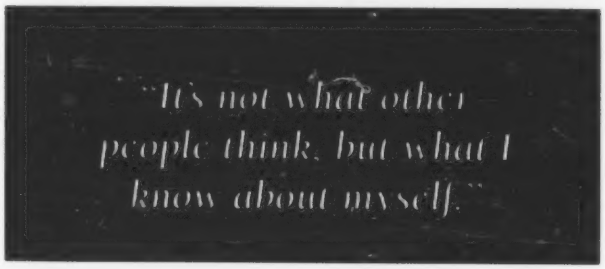
Sponsor: Barbara Mooney
Community Action Southwest

Mary Roger's early years were difficult. Her biological father committed suicide when she was a baby, and she didn't know her biological mother until she was seven. She was adopted as a baby and was physically abused by her adoptive father. By the time she was a teen-ager,

she was very angry. Mary had a degenerative joint disease that made her very awkward. Her self-esteem was low, as she was constantly teased about her weight and her awkwardness.

At the age of 16, in 10th grade, she thought it would be better to marry a man 40 years older than herself than to be in school. Her uncle by adoption, he had always treated her well – that is, until they were married. Then, he started physically and emotionally abusing her. Mary started drinking and became an alcoholic. When her husband had a stroke in 1976, she took care of him until his death two years later. In 1977, she married another alcoholic and endured abuse in this relationship until 1980, when they both quit drinking and started attending church.

Mary became involved in the Mon Valley Unemployment Committee. She was chairperson for the Greene County Chapter, taking part in writing agendas and lobbying activities. As part of the fight against welfare liens, she traveled to Harrisburg and even met with Governor Robert P. Casey. She soon realized: *I have a brain, and I'm smarter than I thought I was.* Other members of the committee encouraged her to get her GED and put her skills to use.



In 1992, when she entered ABE classes hosted by Community Action Southwest her self-confidence was low, and she doubted whether she could pass the test. Despite her joint disease, which makes walking difficult, and her continuing activities with the unemployment committee, she rarely missed a class. Coming to class one day, she fell down a flight of stairs but got up and continued on into class. From then on, she decided to use the entrance for students with disabilities.

In the fall of 1992, after spending countless hours on her own studying, she took her GED test and passed. She has enrolled in New Choices, gone through the JTPA process, and plans to take a computer course the next time it is offered. Her husband, who has been diagnosed as having lung cancer, is very supportive of her efforts. Indicative of her determination is the fact that she has lost 115 pounds since taking her GED test. Her self- esteem and self-confidence have increased, and she is teaching herself to type and play guitar. She is interested in a future involving business or paralegal training and is looking into college courses. She is active in her church, volunteers for the food bank and encourages others to continue their education. Despite her disability, Mary wants to work and donate her time to help other people.

CELEBRATION OF ACHIEVEMENT

HELENA JIMENEZ MOJICA

Luzerne County

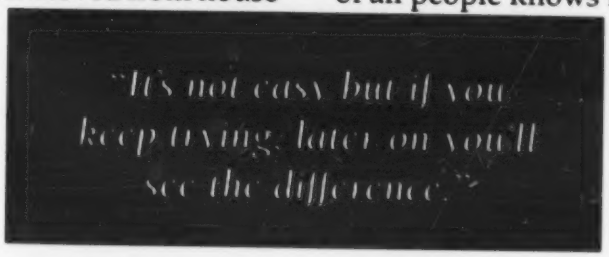
Sponsor: Frank J. Nardone
Luzerne Intermediate Unit 18

Helena Jimenez Mojica was only nine years old when her mother died, leaving her and her brother and sisters with an alcoholic father. Because her father could not care for her, she was sent to live with her grandmother. As Helena got older, it was difficult for her grandmother to handle

her. After several disagreements, she ran away from home. When she returned to her grandmother's house, she was first placed in foster care and then in a detention center with some 50 other girls. She found herself in the company of drug addicts and criminals.

After three years in the detention center, she was able to convince her case worker that she did not belong there and was transferred to a smaller group home for another two years. She was doing well and was allowed to return home to begin the 11th grade. When she went to register, she was told that she would be put back to the 10th grade, but she decided to continue in school anyway. In New York City, school can be very dangerous and frightening, and at 17, she decided it just wasn't worth the effort.

By 18, Helena had a son. It was a difficult pregnancy and she did not have a stable home life at the time. She moved in with relatives, and then moved from house to house. Her son was born with a disability, and he requires special braces to help him walk. He will eventually need surgery to correct his disability.



Wanting to raise her son in a safe environment, Helena and her boyfriend, the father of her child, moved to Wilkes Barre. In 1992, she enrolled in Luzerne Intermediate Unit (IU) 18's adult literacy program and began studying for the GED. When her first attempt to pass the GED test was not successful, she was referred to a Special Point of Contact (SPOC) program sponsored by the IU, Wilkes University, and the Luzerne County Human Resources Development (HRD) Department. This program specializes in individual instruction for students with serious deficiencies in reading and math. After seven months of tutoring, Helena was back in GED classes. After another three months, she tried the test again but once again failed. Her lack of understanding both in English and Spanish was a true barrier. She refused to give up. She resumed her studies and passed the test on her third attempt.

Helena is an enthusiastic promoter of adult literacy and was instrumental in persuading her boyfriend to return for his GED. She also is encouraging her sister to return to classes. On a recent visit to her former class, she encouraged the students to: *Ask questions. Make sure you understand and keep asking until you do understand.* She of all people knows how important it is to keep trying.

In 1993, Helena and her boyfriend graduated. Since then, they were married and now both attend Luzerne County Community College. She would like to pursue a career in child development. She loves working with children and often volunteers at her son's day care center. With their new education and their old determination, Helena and her husband are well on their way to providing a better life for their family.

CELEBRATION of ACHIEVEMENT

SHUN MEI (LINDA) NEMET

Mercer County

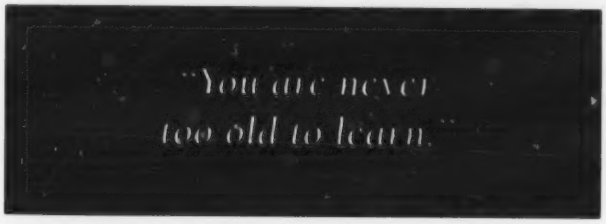
Sponsor: Jan Morgenstern
Mercer County Vo-Technical School

Shun Mei (Linda) Nemet was born into a wealthy family of Taiwanese tea merchants. When the family lost their fortune, she worked in her grandparents' tea garden, completed 12 years of schooling and studied the oriental art of massage. She took a job as a waitress in an American

restaurant, where she met her husband, Joe Nemet, an American military man. In 1976, they married, moved to Pennsylvania and settled down to raise a family.

Ten years later, when Joe was laid off, she enrolled in the Mercer County Vo-Tech ABE class and attended for four months. During this time, she not only learned English, but taught her fellow students a wealth of information ranging from Chinese food to Chinese art. Linda left school to work not only one job, but often three part-time jobs. She also went into business giving oriental massage.

In 1991, with her husband working again, Linda re-enrolled in the Mercer County Vo-Tech Program. After four months in ABE classes, she began studies in GED. Although her husband was laid off several times during this school year, she managed to make ends meet at home without having to quit school again. In May 1992, she earned her high school diploma and received a certificate for perfect attendance. She had come to school every day – 30 miles over rural back roads in all kinds of weather, always smiling and usually bringing something extra – food, games and new students. She has been responsible for the enrollment of at least a dozen new students and when the ABE program needed a new teacher, Linda was able to recommend one. At the same time, she was working at a new part-time job, keeping house, running her business and continuing to be involved in her children's busy social schedules.



After completing a full-time office technology class with perfect attendance, she was hired as a secretary by a literacy program in the area. As a past ABE student, she is able to put new students at ease and assures them that they have made the right decision in returning to school. She has continued to expand her knowledge of computers and has been able to advise her supervisors in computer usage. Her massage business is profitable, and she still holds a part-time job, as well as continuing her interest in the ABLE programs she attended.

Linda is a member of the advisory committee of the Mercer County Vo-Tech, a member of the board of directors of her GED alumni council and is involved in local Chinese-American activities. Whatever she does, she continues to recruit students. She would like to continue her formal education as soon as the opportunity arises. But until that time comes, she uses her time to read, research, investigate and learn as much as possible on her own.

CELEBRATION of ACHIEVEMENT

BERNADETTE OSBORN

Montgomery County

Sponsor: Kathleen Marks
Eagleville Hospital

Bernadette Osborn was the youngest of five children, 13 years younger than her next sibling. Her father was an alcoholic, and her mother, concerned with her own problems, seemed remote from her children. Bernadette grew up knowing she was unexpected and

feeling unwanted. At home, she was abused physically, sexually, and emotionally. In school, she was often absent and had few friends. By the age of 12, she was drinking and dating her husband to be. At 16, she was out of school and married. At 18, she had her first child while her husband was stationed in Vietnam.

After he returned, she lived through four years of his drinking and abuse before ending the marriage. Her initial drug experience was one of curiosity. As it accelerated, it became one of refuge from rejection. By the time Bernadette presented herself for treatment at Eagleville Hospital, she had spent 15 years repeating this pattern of drugs and abusive relationships. Her father had died from alcoholism, and her ex-husband had been murdered. On the positive side, she had two lovely daughters.

Nothing came easy to her, and the GED was no exception. She was withdrawn, genteel and committed to learning. She rarely spoke, but never stopped working. When she finally took the GED test, she was the only one in her group who didn't pass. Determined to see this through even though her treatment at the hospital had ended, she worked on her own, retook the test and gained the 10 points she needed to pass.

She moved into an apartment, started work and within six months, she had her two daughters living with her. Two years later she married. When this did not work out, Bernadette and the two girls moved out on their own. This past summer, she enrolled in college and, in January, she will become a full-time student pursuing a nursing degree. She says that she can now stand on her own and take care of herself and her children.

Besides working, attending school and parenting her two girls, Bernadette is very active in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), and Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA). She also sponsors other recovering women spreading the message of sobriety, learning and growing. Bernadette is a butterfly the metamorphosis is remarkable. She leads by example: this former drug-addicted, high-school dropout now proudly states: *My daughter and I are both college students.*

CELEBRATION OF ACHIEVEMENT

AMY UHLER

Northampton County

Sponsors: Linda Martin & Janet Herr
Bangor - Pen Argyl Adult Education

In 1980, as a 10th grade student, Amy Uhler was hospitalized with Crohn's disease. Suddenly the high school activities she enjoyed, such as basketball and band, were off-limits due to doctor's orders. As an 11th-grader, she became pregnant and was hospitalized for the first

three months of her pregnancy. Her Crohn's caused her to lose 11 pounds, and it became impossible to stay in school. Besides, as a member of a large family whose mother and two siblings were high school dropouts, she did not see any value in education.

She married Roger, the baby's father, and during the next five years, they added two more children to their family. Her husband had to work long hours to support his young family, which put stress on the marriage. This stress increased when her two nieces came to live with the family after they were abandoned by their mother. Amy faced the realization that she had no marketable skills.Now, the education she gave up so easily became a treasured goal.

In 1987, she signed up for GED classes at the Bangor-Pen Argyl School District. Armed with a new appreciation for education, there was no stopping her. She completed the required 45 hours of classes for her diploma from the school district, as well as the state. Health problems again presented an obstacle. Amy had to take her last GED exam the day before she was scheduled for a hysterectomy. With a snow storm approaching, she arranged to take the test during the daytime hours. She knew better than to put it off until her recovery was complete. After receiving her GED in 1988, Amy took in two nieces who had been abandoned by their mother.

"Education is a lifetime endeavor. The buck doesn't stop here."

Thinking about how she enjoyed teaching Sunday School, she decided to be an elementary school teacher. She enrolled in Northampton Community College. Through their literacy corps, she received training as a tutor and began helping with a GED class. Her mother loaned her $100 to apply for admittance to East Stroudsburg University and her mother-in-law helped out by caring for the children. Going to school was now one of the things Amy did well. She managed to get the kids ready at 6:00 a.m., go to class all day and stay up to midnight to study. Even a case of pneumonia during the last semester did not hold her back. She graduated Cum Laude on May 22, 1993, with her whole family at graduation to cheer her on. She is currently substitute teaching in nine local districts while looking for a permanent position. One of her goals is to establish a scholarship for other GED students.

CELEBRATION '91

ACHIEVEMENT

LILLIAN METZCHER

Philadelphia County

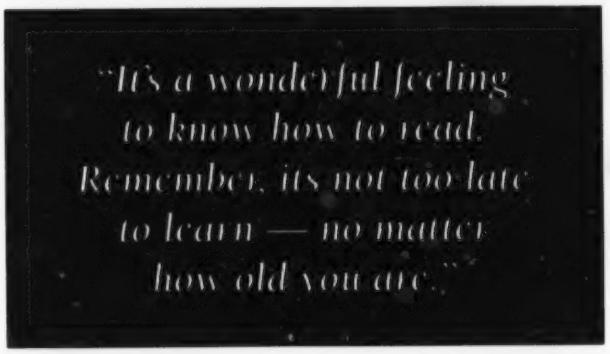
Sponsor: Alice Redman
Lutheran Settlement House
Women's Program

Lillian Metzcher attended special education classes from the age of six to 16, when she left school in order to work at a hospital and in a movie theater. She lived with her grandparents and spent a lot of time caring for them. Her mother lived with them as well, but was not recog-

nized as a part of the family because she was sickly and unstable. Lillian was told that her father had died.

When she was 18 years old, she got pregnant and married the father of her child. She is still married to him and they now have five children. Of these, one is deaf, one is retarded and a third has a learning disability. Getting them into special schools and programs presented a challenge for Lillian. She understands the need for them to get an appropriate education because Lillian herself is officially labeled *learning disabled.*

For most of her life she believed that she was retarded. She first realized she was capable of learning when she enrolled in the Lutheran Settlement House Women's program in February of 1989. She wanted to learn how to read, write checks and take care of her home in case anything were to happen to her husband. Her family was not supportive of her decision to return to school. In her late 40's, she thought she was too old for school and was fearful that the other students would make fun of her the way they did when she was a child.



When she entered the program, she could not read enough to take the placement test. Since then, she has gone from a beginning literacy class to the GED class, raising her reading level from 1.0 to 9.0 in four years. She also has achieved other goals such as learning to use a computer. Lillian has written her own autobiography and appeared on public television. She volunteered to take part in the Mayor's Commission on Literacy's Power Learning Project and has been a key figure in the encouragement and success of others in the project.

She is still attending classes twice a week with nearly perfect attendance and volunteers about 18 hours a week as a tutor in beginning reading classes. Lillian helps train new tutors by coming to the training sessions and explaining what she does as a tutor and a learner. In June 1993, she received an award for being one of the two most dedicated tutors in the program. She also serves on the advisory board of the local Domestic Violence Prevention program and spends time each week as a domestic violence prevention volunteer. Her goal for the future is to pass the GED test and become a teacher. She is constantly encouraging other learners to remain dedicated to their goals and is an advocate for adult learners, as well as for literacy programs.

CELEBRATION of ACHIEVEMENT

RUTH SALTERS

Philadelphia County

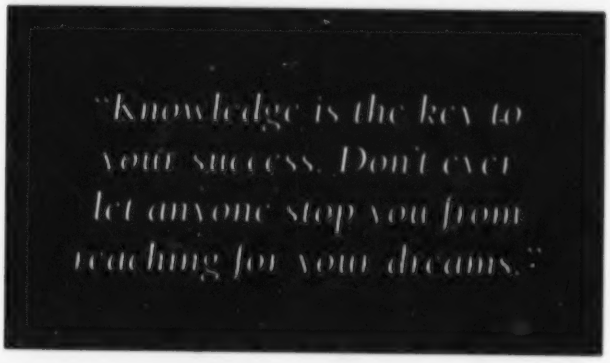
Sponsor: Marie V. Knibbe
Germantown Women's
Educational Project

Ruth Salters entered the Germantown Women's Educational Project in the fall of 1992 with the goal of getting her GED. She had completed 11th grade and entered 12th grade when she dropped out of school. All she needed to graduate was English 4 when she married

and moved out of the state. She hoped to complete her degree in her new home but things did not work out that way. In 1983, she returned to Pennsylvania without a degree. She now has an 11-year-old daughter and a 10-year-old son. Her son, Fred, has Menkes Syndrome, a rare disease in which a simple common cold can easily develop into life-threatening pneumonia. She must often drop everything when he is ill to care for him both at home and during frequent hospitalization.

Throughout the 1992-93 academic year, Ruth continued her GED studies despite one serious hospitalization of her son. In spring 1993, she took and passed the GED and that summer participated in graduation ceremonies. During her time in class, Ruth was a motivating model to her classmates as she consistently persevered in the face of great challenges. She played an important support role in the lives of many other students and offered tutorial assistance to students who needed help with the material she had mastered. Ruth also participated in video taping a promotional piece about women facing educational challenges. Now that she has completed her goal, she continues to be a promoter and supporter of the program, taking part in staff planning meetings and contributing valuable suggestions. She is a candidate for membership in the program's board of directors.

Her future plans include going to college to study special education. Because of her extensive experience working with children who have special needs, she plans to continue in this field as her career. Ruth is a member of the Home and School Association and volunteers at her son's school. She helps in the classroom, assists the teachers with the specialized care her son needs, and helps to conduct a range of motion exercises with her son and other students. She also is involved in a community service program at her daughter's school, monitoring students and serving as a teacher's aide. She recently has begun to perform with a drama guild and enjoys the opportunity to act in local theater productions which address community issues such as drug abuse.



Front row (left to right); Bernadette Osborn , Harold Speelman, Julie Bermudez, Shun Mei Nemet.
Back row (left to right); Amy Uhler, Lillian Metzcher, David Wolfe, Ruth Salters.
Mary Rogers and Helena Mojica are missing from the picture.

CELEBRATION OF

ACHIEVEMENT

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